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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

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SUBJECT: Somali Truce Holds Despite Fighting

Classified by PolOff John O'Leary. Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (U) The truce between Hawiye clan militia and Ethiopian troops in Mogadishu appears to be holding despite relatively heavy small arms and mortar fire since Tuesday evening (4/12). The fighting was mainly between Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces and Hawiye/Abgal militia, with occasional Ethiopian artillery support for the TFG troops. As of noon local on April 13, sporadic firing is continuing in Mogadishu, but much reduced from the previous two days.

¶2. (C) According to a press contact in northern Mogadishu, the streets are virtually deserted, with little vehicle traffic. The source indicated that nothing is coming in through the port or by road; and the remaining residents fear food shortages. Multiple sources indicate that residents continue to flee the city. According to UN/OCHA, new pockets of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Mogadishu have been located, and the international relief community now believes Mogadishu IDPs may number between 200 thousand and 300 thousand. Some sources are now reporting more than a thousand dead in the late-March and early-April fighting in the city.

¶3. (C) Several Abgal sources have told us that this week's fighting was a demonstration of solidarity with the broader clan, as well as a rejection of TFG attempts to split the Hawiye. These sources also stated that the fighting was an Abgal rebuff of Deputy Defense Minister Jelle's April 8 call on the sub-clan to drive the Hawiye/Haber Gedir sub-clan from Mogadishu. (Comment. Jelle gave his speech to Abgal TFG supporters the day after AF A/S Frazer visited Baidoa and met with TFG President Yusuf and Prime Minister Gedi. Gedi reportedly attended the April 8 Abgal meeting, but we do not know his reaction to the "call". The Somali Ambassador to Kenya told us that Gedi, on his return to Mogadishu, would issue a public statement designed to calm the waters. In a meeting with Haber Gedir/Sa'ad leaders on Tuesday (4/10), President Yusuf assured them that Jelle was conveying Jelle's personal views and did not express TFG policy. End comment.)

¶4. (C) The truce talks continue in Mogadishu between the Ethiopians and a committee of Hawiye elders. According to sources in Mogadishu, the talks have made little progress on substantive issues beyond a simple cessation of fighting between the two groups. A knowledgeable source told us that the Ethiopians are insisting that the Hawiye bring their militia commanders to the talks to facilitate military-related discussions; but the Hawiye are hesitant to expose their military leaders to the Ethiopians. According to this source, the elders instead will bring four lower-ranking officers in hopes of satisfying the Ethiopian negotiators. The TFG leadership continues to disavow the Ethiopian-Hawiye truce.

¶5. (C) Comment. The Hawiye seem to be going out of their way to

exculpate the Ethiopians from the fighting of the last two days, in spite of intermittent Ethiopian artillery support for TFG forces. This unwillingness to blame the Ethiopians may be an indication of just how reluctant the Hawiye are to continue the fight. A long-time Somalia observer noted that in the "old days" the fighting of the past few weeks would have occasioned all-out clan warfare. That a truce continues to hold may demonstrate that the Hawiye, and probably the other clans, have little desire to continue the 16-year fight. Nonetheless, the current fighting and the recent entrenching in Haber Gedir neighborhoods indicate that the clan and its sub-clans will not be marginalized by the TFG and will insist on meaningful reconciliation--if there is to be lasting peace.

Ranneberger